

2. Jesus Demonstrates Power over Sin and Calls Sinners: Mark 2

Mark had recorded in chapter 1 how John the Baptist, came preparing the way for Jesus. John was baptizing in Bethany beyond Jordan when Jesus came to be baptized. When Jesus came up out of the water, “. . .the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’” Jesus went into Galilee preaching that the time had come and that the kingdom of God was at hand. In the first chapter, Jesus also selected disciples, whom he promised to make fishers of men. It was also in the first chapter that Jesus amazed the people because he spoke as one with authority. Finally, the chapter closed with Jesus claiming that he came to preach. The chapter concludes with Jesus teaching: “21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.”

In chapter 2, Jesus returned to Capernaum and emphasized immediately his power over sin; his calling sinners to the gospel; his power over disease and illness; and his Lordship over matters of the law.

The center of Jesus early activity will be in Galilee and Capernaum, placing him on the crossroads of the travel in the world of his day. The Great Trunk Road passed through the area and then on to Damascus and Babylon. Travelers from all over the Roman world will hear the teaching of the Lord from this vantage point.

Power over Sin

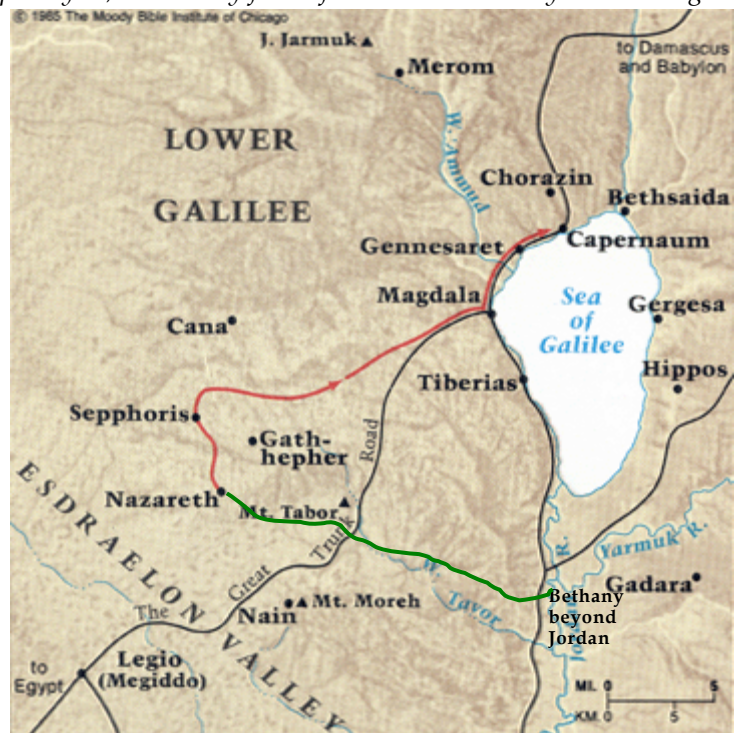
Mark 2: 1-5

2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

As the large crowd gathered Jesus “preached the word to them.” Undoubtedly, this word is the same message preached in Mark 1:14-15:

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The men who brought the paralytic could not get in because of the crowd, and therefore, they lowered the man through the roof. When Jesus saw their faith, he did not instantly heal the man; but he forgave him his sins.



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This demonstrated the power of Jesus over sin—a power evident from the beginning of his ministry. With this power is evident his desire to see the sins of all mankind forgiven.

Mark 2:6-7

6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

The Lord forgiving sins is the point of conflict with the teachers of the law. They immediately accuse the Lord of blaspheming.

Mark 2:8-12

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus also had the power to know their thinking and discern what is in their hearts. Jesus then clearly states that his healing the paralytic was to demonstrate that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Jesus gave the incident focus when he presented the teachers of the law with the dilemma: which is easier to forgive sins or heal paralytic? The people understood that the power of Jesus was the power of God and it was He whom they praised.

The use of the phrase “Son of Man” will become the common way the Jesus refers to himself (The phrase is used 86 times in the New Testament with all but four are used by Christ in reference to himself). The phrase, used often in the Old Testament to refer to men, seems in the New Testament to express the human part of Jesus. Even his contemporaries wondered of its meaning in John 12:34:

34 The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

In Matt 8:20, the term spoke of the lowliest side of the Lord’s earthly existence: “20 Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’”

At times the term includes all the is powerful in the Lord as he extended salvation to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:9-10: “9 Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.’”

Jesus Calls Sinners

Mark 2:13-14

13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

Indeed, sinners like Levi were lost. Jesus, who continued to teach, saw Levi. Since Roman tax collectors were unscrupulous their greed and extortion, and since they used their position to abuse the people, it was significant that the Lord chose Levi. What better example of reaching

out to a sinner could one find?

Mark 2:15-17

15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus ate with sinners and people of ill repute, like tax collectors. What a stir this caused among the Pharisees, who were known for their self-righteous attitudes. Jesus taught them plainly: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." The Lord repeats this teaching in Luke 19:9-10 quoted here and above: "9 Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'"

New Wine into New Wine Skins

Mark 2:18:22

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

Fasting was a common practice under the Mosaic Law. John was living and preaching under the law; and therefore, he and his disciples would have kept the Law. When they asked why the Lord's disciples did not fast, they gave the Lord opportunity to teach the first lesson on the advent of the church, the bride of Christ.

19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast."

The forecast is clear; the bridegroom will be taken away, to gloriously return in the last day. The metaphor of the bridegroom will weave throughout the New Testament to *The Revelation* at the end. In John's account of the gospel, John the Baptist had already established the metaphor. John 3:29-30 reads:

29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less.

In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Jesus taught about the unexpected return of the bridegroom in Matt 25:1-ff. He begins: "25 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise."

Paul presented the church as the pure virgin waiting for the bridegroom, Christ, in 2 Cor 11:2: "2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."

This concept, introduced by the Lord in the gospels, grows full flower in the revelation where the bride and bridegroom are joined in victory and majesty on high. Rev 19:7-8 reads

7 Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

John witnessed this beautiful bride in Rev 21:2: "2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Rev 21:9 teaches clearly whose wife it is: "9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'" Finally at the very end of the Bible the Lord's teaching comes to be in Rev 22:17: "17 The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

Jesus introduces a metaphor that at first notice seems incongruent with the context. But the context was about fasting and keeping the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law is the old garment and the unshrunk cloth is the gospel of Jesus. If the gospel is sewn to the Law, the garment will fail. Similarly, if the gospel (new wine) is poured into the Mosaic Law (old wineskins) the old wineskin will break. The new wine, the gospel, must be poured into new wineskins, the New Testament.

The Son of Man is Lord Even of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-28

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Once again, the Pharisees test Jesus. Why are his disciples working on the Sabbath? After citing the example of David, Jesus makes one of his most important claims: He is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus had taught from the beginning that he had come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Matt 5:17 teaches: "17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Just as with the bridegroom teaching had its complete fulfillment, this teaching about the Law had its fulfillment. Paul wrote in Col 2:13-15:

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Thus, it was to be the Lord of the Sabbath took the Law away; and Paul in retrospect could write in Col 2:16-17:

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

That the Sabbath was only a shadow of the Lord of Sabbath, who is the reality, puts this entire episode in perspective.